

THE INTERACTIVE METHOD

*THE PATH OF HEALING
THROUGH EMPATHY AND COMPASSION*

COMBINED EDITION

VOLUME ONE: THE PROCESS

VOLUME TWO: APPLICATIONS

VOLUME THREE: OUT OF THE PRACTICE

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Teaching Focusing the Way We Can Best Learn It

Martin Buber says in *I and Thou*:

Without a Thou there cannot be an I, because "through the Thou a man becomes I"

The Place Where You Are Standing Is Holy (Winkler 1995)

Introduction: First Principles of learning-

Before commenting on the teaching of Focusing, I would like to point to how we learn many things and that we learn through some methods easier than through others. First, we have naturally occurring structures that exist in a primitive or little developed state within ourselves. These infant, genetic structures wait for healthy stimulation in a safe environment in order to develop into robust adult structures.

The method which utilizes external stimulation and external modeling by another human being to develop our inner being, to facilitate our growing forward, to help us self-actualize seems to be a reasonable explanation for the development of these naturally occurring infant parts of ourselves. The modeling that most closely resembles and naturally fits these inner structures is the easiest to assimilate...to take in, digest and metabolize. I use the internalization of language as one example because it is straightforward. I use the development of empathy as the other example because it is integral to the whole healing practice of Focusing.

The language of our minds -

Child development progresses from an interplay between the child's internal and external worlds. For instance, a model for the acquisition of language is that there exists in the newborn what is called a "language acquisition device" or LAD. The infant has genetically occurring internal structures for speech. If that structure isn't stimulated externally by speech, then speech as we know it will not develop. If it is stimulated, the child, almost without exception, will speak the "mother-tongue" competently and fluently.

One developmental hypothesis for the internalization of language is:

1. The infant hears words spoken, for instance, by the mother. The baby learns to respond to the externally generated sounds and meanings encrypted in the words. The mother might say, "Laurie, give the toy to Johnny."
2. The infant learns to reproduce these sounds with their implied meanings. She then can coach herself verbally. She will say out loud her own instructions to herself, "Laurie, give the toy to Johnny."
3. The child, after some time rehearsing by using these external vocalizations, now internalizes this thought process and will say

silently inside herself, “Laurie, give the toy to Johnny.” She responds to her silent command by taking action and giving Johnny the toy just as she had responded first to her mother and later to herself saying it out loud. Outside language stimulated the development of inside language.

Developing empathically-

I use the preceding model of speech internalization to help me understand my own internalization of empathy. We are genetically endowed with what I will call an “empathy acquisition device” or an “empathy gene.” If it is adequately stimulated, I believe we become reasonably healthy, empathic human beings. If it is not adequately stimulated, I believe we remain trapped in our own unhealthy, limiting, painful and long-suffering narcissism. We then will fail in one of our chief developmental tasks, to make the transition from healthy “primary narcissism” (engaging our environment to take care of us) to healthy “secondary narcissism” (learning to care for ourselves with the involvement of others) to healthy, compassionate, empathic human beings (engaging with others in our environment to form a connected and caring community, caring for and about one another even to the point of intimacy).

I use the simple but adequate definition of empathy as the ability to sense into another person’s world from their internal frame of reference “as if” you were the other person or to understand the other person’s experiencing “as if” you were the other person.

I underscore that empathy is an “*as if*” experience, and I add compassionate to empathy, for inside of myself it is one long, run-on word “compassionate-empathy.” Empathy without compassion and compassion without empathy are incomplete and, perhaps, even dangerous as in the sociopath with a high degree of empathy who uses it for personal gain or the person who turns compassion to pity. I have explored my understanding of compassion in an article called “*To Compassion through the Experience of Pain, Suffering and Struggle*” so I want to give only a basic definition of compassion. At a basic level, I take compassion to be a special form...a subset of love. Compassion carries with it the ability to be fully present to suffering, that is to take in suffering to a depth indicated by the depth of the condition called suffering, and to be with the suffering in a caring, loving way.

The stages of growth into empathic emergence-

I will explain what I mean by the developmental line or the stages of growth from narcissism to empathy:

1. An example of *stage one* or healthy primary narcissism would be the infant who cries to indicate she is cold or wet or hungry, or smiles to indicate she wants an interaction such as being picked up. If the environment responds adequately, that is, if the mother or father covers the baby or changes her diaper or gives her food or smiles back and picks her up, she is soothed and the crying stops. An example of unhealthy primary narcissism might be when something has gone awry in the infant's world and she doesn't cry to indicate her needs or she can't stop crying when her needs are attended to or she fails to develop the smiling behavior.
2. Good-enough attention from the caregiver is eventually internalized by the child, and her own structures are stimulated and developed to the point that she can perform self-caring and self-soothing functions. She learns to interact with her environment. She can ask for food, and eventually she can get food for herself. She can take care of herself or get her needs met by engaging others at a more sophisticated level than crying or pointing. She can be self-nurturing. This would be an example of internalization and the development of *stage two* or healthy secondary narcissism. An example of unhealthy secondary narcissism is the overly dependent child who can't master age appropriate self-care tasks – can't learn to eat independently, can't calm herself or self-soothe, can't entertain herself for any length of time, and the like. Or the overly independent child who won't let any outside help come in – won't let the adult assist with putting on shoes and tying shoe laces before those skills are developed, and so on.
3. *Stage three* or healthy empathic development is the internalization of the modeling of empathy in a good-enough environment. This means having interactions with others where you experience being listened to and understood in a caring, compassionate way. You experience it yourself. For example, your mother or father really listens to you and responds to the self you are revealing to them; and, most importantly, you feel heard. And you see it happen between others in your environment. You see your parents interact with empathy and compassion. Your own "empathic acquisition device" is stimulated and grows. You can accept empathy and compassion from others, and you can exhibit empathy and compassion toward others.

This is a stage theory, therefore each stage builds upon the previous stage. It seems desirable if not necessary to have negotiated healthy primary narcissism and healthy secondary narcissism to become firm inside of yourself in order to begin the transcending interpersonal task of developing socially into compassionate and empathic human beings. If stage three is attempted without a firm sense of self, either a healthy empathic self won't form or an "as if" self presents, one that appears empathic but doesn't really experience empathy.

The other side of the mountain-

A test for the seeds of empathy is to show a child a three-dimensional model of a mountain and ask the child to imagine what the view is for the other person sitting across from her. Failure at this level is stuckness in narcissism, not being able to grasp how another's life is for her, not being able to sense the view from the other side of the mountain, not being able to grasp that there is another view of the mountain. So, some children have an empathic imagination and can imagine how it might be from the other side of the mountain. Some children can't imagine the view from the other side of the mountain at all, almost as if there were no other side to the mountain; and some children imagine that the view from the other side of the mountain is the same as theirs. These states can be age-appropriate lack of empathic development, that is for the child's age empathic development wouldn't yet be expected. Or they can be the result of narcissistic wounding that hasn't allowed empathic development to occur.

Also, each stage of development from narcissism to empathy isn't necessarily complete when the next stage emerges, and tasks of former stages can be present at any stage. We are always fine-tuning and developing further, and that is healthy.

What happens when something goes wrong?

If this development of compassionate empathy is interrupted we can become stuck in our own unhealthy narcissism. We can become consumed with caring only for ourselves. This is like the original Narcissus being condemned to looking endlessly into a pool at his own reflection. Similarly, we can become consumed with caring only for others. Again, this leads to an inability to adequately care for ourselves. In either case, we don't become proficient at self-care, self-nurturing, self-understanding and self-compassion. We can't self-soothe. We are left with feelings of incompleteness and feelings of incompetence that lead to – addictions, compulsions, obsessions – a variety of forms of neurotic behaviors all aimed at compensating for the lack of internalizing the abilities to be self-caring, to make deep, intimate,

empathic connections and to be genuinely compassionate. We haven't been able to successfully perform the tasks required for healthy narcissism or the development of a healthy self, and we haven't been able to bridge to becoming interpersonally, socially well-functioning, empathic human beings.

I am reminded here of what Hillel the Elder in the first century B.C.E. is quoted as saying:

If I am not for my Self, then who will be? And if I am solely for my Self, What am I? And if [I am not for my Self] in the moment, then when?

(Babylonian Talmud, *Avot* 1:14)

Can we learn as adults to be empathic? A second chance-

If our empathic development has been interrupted, it can be re-established. Interactive Focusing is one of the few methods specifically formulated for teaching compassionate empathy to those whose development has been stunted or to enhance the development of empathy in those who have already started on this path.

My story: How I am becoming self-empathic and self-compassionate-

I knew that my own development as an empathic person had been set off-track. I had somehow taken upon myself the role of the caregiver, this done at the expense of taking good care of myself. I was what I call narcissistically wounded. Though it didn't look like a classic case of narcissism – continuously looking into the pool at my own reflection, only caring about and for myself – I was stunted in my development. And though I appeared to be very caring and perhaps empathic toward those in my world, I didn't feel, inside of myself, empathic. I didn't really get how it was for the other person to be living with the particular situation they might be sharing with me. I wasn't getting the emotional benefit of the connection, and I wasn't getting the societal and personal benefit of expanding and deepening my world through empathic sharing. I felt caught on the thorns of the rose bush. If I were doing what I "should," why did it feel so bad?

There was a quality of hollowness and deadness and boredom. Even within myself there was a way that I was distant from my own experience, defending myself from really feeling into my own life situation. Everything was "as if" for me, leaving me feeling *as if* I were looking at life through a frosted glass or trying to smell silk flowers. This defense had some short-term gains, but great long-term losses. While it did keep me from feeling some of the pain of the interpersonal buffeting-about of growing up, it also kept me from feeling the joys – especially in terms of deep connection or intimacy. When I developed this defense it might have served some useful purpose, but now it was severely self-limiting.

Using Focusing and Interactive Focusing helped me, as an adult, become empathic toward the person to whom I was listening – Focusing because it brought me back to the aliveness of my bodysense and Interactive Focusing because it gave me an interpersonal structure in which to grow my “empathy gene” forward. When I got that part – sensing into how it was for the other person to be carrying that life situation – I eventually was able to receive or let empathy come in from the other person toward me, feeling safe enough to let them see more deeply into myself. A great while later, I was able to become self-empathic.

I believe that I first needed to be able to experience empathy externally before I could internalize it. To heal my deep-seated wounding and the arrest of my empathic development, someone had to aid me in expressing my empathic understanding of them. They had to model receiving empathy from me, perhaps even coach me in the fine points. I had to take the difficult step of emulating that so I could receive empathy from another person. And after I had mastered that, I had the tools to begin to receive compassion and empathy *from* myself. These steps are frontally engaged in Interactive Focusing. A place is made, structurally, for each of these things to happen – including the safe space that surrounds and protects the people and the process.

The rewards of empathy-

The rewards of empathy are many. I got how it was to be living situations in the many worlds the storytellers shared with me and not just in my own necessarily limited world. I got to feel the broader and deeper aliveness, and I find it quite seductive – that is, I want more of it. I could try on many situations, many solutions, many ways of being that might fit me also. I learned about real, deep connectedness, caring deeply for more of the other person and eventually for more of myself – because I can see more of the other person as well as seeing more of myself. Developing into an empathic human being is a transpersonal, transformative and transcendent process – we transform as we start transcending our own narrow boundaries, and I think this leads to a more soulful and spiritual existence. Empathy helps break down barriers of all kinds that exist between people without disturbing healthy boundaries. To the contrary, empathy helps define and establish firm boundaries. Empathy is a tool for the appreciation and acceptance of diversity. Empathy is empowering. This list isn’t exhaustive, and you and I will find many more benefits than we are yet aware of.

Old bottle?

Returning to the bodysense-based practice of inner exploration, what I'm suggesting is a way to teach the inner process of Focusing through Interactive Focusing that, though similar, is significantly different from the way Focusing has been taught, classically.

When teaching Gendlin's (*Focusing*, 1978) classic six-step Focusing process, we first described the six steps. We then had an experienced trainer guide the new Focuser through these steps to give her an actual experience of having a six-step Focusing process. Soon after this we began teaching her what was called "active listening" which was borrowed from Carl Rogers' client-centered (now person-centered) psychotherapy. This consisted primarily of reflective responding. We taught the listener to guide the Focuser through the six steps and to listen using reflective responses. When the listener mastered guiding the six steps and giving reflective responses, we taught her "process suggestions" such as, "Could you spend caring time with that wounded place that just came?" or "Could you make room for both of those feelings to be there together and see what comes?" to aid the Focuser if her process became stuck.

It was through didactic training and then guiding the Focuser through an experience of the process itself that we assumed they would internalize Focusing and be able to have a process by themselves. While workshop participants reported having a wonderful experience during the workshop, they didn't seem to be able to replicate the experience for themselves outside of the workshops.

When we discovered that people didn't often Focus or process by themselves, we suggested that they form Focusing partnerships where one person would Focus while the other person listened, after which they would switch roles. The listener didn't put any of her own material into the Focuser's process. On the contrary. The listener was instructed to clear what came inside of her so she would be able to listen to her partner in an empathic though neutral or non-intrusive way. In Focusing Partnerships, what came in the listener from or about the Focuser's story typically was never straightforwardly processed.

New wine?

Through the four building blocks of Interactive Focusing we still teach people to have an inner Focusing process. As a step separate from the building blocks, we teach them to clear a space from which to listen to themselves and others because the practice of clearing-a-space has application beyond Focusing. Using the four building blocks, we teach them 1. to identify and maintain a safe space in which to process, 2. to identify their bodysense and

tell their stories from that place, 3. to listen and make reflections from the bodysense and 4. to resonate the listener's reflections which seems to move the Focuser's story forward (giving the listener feedback if necessary). The building block method is an alternative form of teaching Focusing. Gendlin's third and fourth steps, finding a "handle word" and resonating it against the bodysense, have taken a different form. Finding a handle word was an awkward step for me. It has been replaced by sensing the quality of the issue contained in the bodysense and holding on to it. The Focuser can then take the listener's reflection back to the bodysense experience and resonate it 1. to check it for fit and for accuracy, 2. to see whether she feels the listener got it the way she intended it – to sense if she feels empathically heard and 3. to allow for the further unfolding which is the natural outcome of the stimulation of resonating. Gendlin's fifth step, "asking," has dropped out as it seemed to apply mostly to a stuck process, and I personally found it a bit intrusive no matter how closely it fit my own material and how gently it was offered. It seemed to give my process a different direction than it might have taken had the "question" not been offered. Similarly, process suggestions are infrequent as there is less often the stuckness to which process suggestions apply. We still use: step one – clearing a space; step two – getting a bodysense of the issue; and step six – receiving. We use steps three and four, getting handle words and resonating, in the altered form described above.

A significant newness-

What is new is that we teach a person to tell her story in the context of specifically structured empathic, experiential listening. By experiential listening I mean that the listener takes the Focuser's story inside and listens from the depth of her bodysense. She then uses her bodysense to select the reflection of the experience-bearing part of the story. Taking the storyteller's experience into the inner depth of your own bodysense, bodysense-to-bodysense communication, is fundamental to empathic listening. And we have learned that merger and codependency don't happen at the level of the bodysense...we are able to maintain our individuality by staying in touch with our own unique bodysense, which we sense as separate from the other's.

The listener first uses only reflections, interjecting none of her own material. While there is no denial that much is going on inside the listener during the telling of the story, the listener is asked to hold that to the side, but keep it close enough to retrieve, until it is her turn to process. Each segment of the process is rather brief, taking only a few minutes in the telling, in contrast to the partnership which is an extended telling. When it is her turn to process, she then can address how it was for her to hear what the storyteller

shared. I believe that this is a key part of being able to listen to yourself with empathy and compassion. In the interaction, you have just had someone model it for you. And in contrast to Focusing Partnerships, what comes for the listener is shared within the parameters of the process itself. This capitalizes on the living experience and, thereby, keeps it experiential...in the moment. The listener shares with the Focuser how the Focuser's material affected her in direct relationship to the Focuser. It is what I call a relationship check. For instance, the listener might say, "A real sadness came in me for you when I heard how long you have suffered with your ancient inability to organize yourself. And there is a way I admire the aliveness you expressed in your struggle to make it different for yourself." The listener also shares what of her own material it touches, for example, "When I heard all of that about the chaos in your life, I am taken back to how it was for me to live in a home where nothing was ever put back. I couldn't ever find anything, and it made me want to cry almost all the time. Then I would be laughed at and teased. And the saddest part of that for me is that I taught myself to hold in my tears so I wouldn't be ridiculed and teased...to the point that, to this day, I can no longer cry. In this moment I can sense the stuck tears and the frustration of that...the incompleteness. I am mostly out of touch with my own sadness. Umm...right here there is a little pop of surprise. I sense a light or is it lightness...some hope comes in...about, well...maybe...just the way you could struggle with your own hard part, maybe I could *struggle* with my *own* inability to feel my *own* sadness. Isn't that a funny thing...to want to *own*...sadness?"

The program is there, but we don't use it-

We are programmed for this form of sharing which is a naturally occurring interpersonal, social phenomenon that connects us to our world and to ourselves and makes interactions an expanding experience: when we tell our stories, there is a yearning to know how our story is received and how we are now held by our listener...and whether our listener has had similar experiences...really could understand us...and are we unique yet part of some larger norm? As natural as it sounds, we rarely share this with one another, and this limits the depth of relationships. We never quite know where we are in the relationship...how the other person feels about us. We usually don't share how we feel about the other person. And we see only limited parts of each other...the part not shared makes much of us mutually invisible.

The story is in the *differences*-

I have spent much time circling around the comparison of the similarities and differences between the classical way of teaching Focusing and teaching Focusing through Interactive Focusing, using the building block model. While the similarities are just that – similar, it is through the differences that we can illustrate the key pieces Interactive Focusing brings.

Our inner process flows from external stimulation-

I have used the examples of internalization of language and empathic development to explain why I feel that an inner process, in this instance Focusing, is more readily taught by using an external process that most closely duplicates what we are both ready for and want to have happen inside of ourselves. We learn most easily when we can assimilate new material that can be taken into existing structures with a natural flow rather than through rote memorization or pretzeling and contortions. The thing we wish to learn must be similar enough to the inside learning structure to allow it to be taken in and digested. Simply put, it is through the discipline of Interactive Focusing and the modeling of being listened to and listening to others with empathy and compassion that we can learn to listen to ourselves empathically and compassionately. This, of course, brings the question, “Can we really Focus alone and listen to our own story with compassionate empathy *until* we have had the experience modeled outside of ourselves?”

The Way: Natural and efficient-

The most natural and efficient way I know to teach Interactive Focusing is to use the building block method (*see an expanded description of the building blocks in the article “The Four Building Blocks”*). To reiterate, the *first* building block is the creating and maintaining a right environment, a safe space in which to go inward to process our deep truths. The *second* building block requires an experiential definition of the bodysense on which all Focusing processes are based. By experiential definition I mean we must have a direct experience of our own bodysense – we need to identify and define bodysense from our own physical experience of it. The bodysense is the way to inner knowing that is found deep within ourselves and that lets us experience our aliveness and become aware of the deep truths at our very core – even to the level of our cells. The *third* building block is developing our ability to listen to another’s story and deep, unfolding truth from our own bodysense with genuine compassion and empathy. And we need a way to exhibit to the storyteller that we have, indeed, heard her – we can offer reflections which she can check for fit. The *fourth* building block is telling our story from our bodysense, checking our listener by resonating her

reflections to be sure that we feel heard empathically and giving our listener feedback to help her stay empathically connected to us.

Once we have taken in the basics of Interactive Focusing, we can follow our natural developmental path and start listening to our own deep, inner truths unfold in the same way we would listen empathically and compassionately to another.

Turning Interactive Focusing in on ourselves-

Intrapersonal Focusing, Focusing within ourselves, processing internally can be seen to be applying Interactive Focusing to ourselves with the benefit of using a method that contains the instruction for self-empathy and self-compassion. In the same way we learn to internalize our own voice, in the same way we develop from healthy narcissism to healthy empathy, we can internalize empathic, compassionate listening to our own inner process. Please refer to my article *Self-Interactive Focusing* for an example of how the process might actually go.

Where has the critic gone, and what difference does this make?

Mary McGuire offers the thought that "human beings aren't meant to live and process alone. That is when the critic comes in."

Those of us who practice Interactive Focusing have found that the critic is interestingly absent from the process. This isn't to say that caution, self-examination, self-doubt and self-questioning don't enter. But the punishing or blaming or shaming or humiliating or guilt-inducing, the blatantly abusive or the subtly manipulating voice of the critic hasn't found fertile ground here. Is it that empathy and compassion are the natural foes of the voice of the critic and that in a good-enough surrounding we are left to process our truths without unwelcome interruption? Did the critic originally enter in an inhospitable environment, and does a good-enough environment let the wounds from the critic start to heal? This has, indeed, been my experience which I hope will be reported as a generalized experience. Building this healing environment is a primary task of Interactive Focusing – one that is not only implied but one that is in the structure and monitored for throughout the interaction.

The substantial absence of the appearance of the critic is a surprising observation that has come from many hours of Interactive Focusing with many different sets of partners. Its significance is worth noting, examining and making meaning of in more depth.

Though processing the critic voice and message brings opportunities, I am not okay with its coming to interrupt or block an ongoing process, and, in this way, I welcome relief from the critic during a process that isn't about the

critic. I want the choice as to whether and when I process the critic. I don't want to be the disempowered victim, one more time. And I want to be sure to bring empathy and compassion to myself, the person under the critic, when I do choose to enter into a process with or about my critic.

What comes with mastery of the building blocks-

If we have mastered the building blocks:

1. We can create a good-enough environment in which our story can safely unfold.
2. We can experience our bodysense of our issue and know how to tell our story from this place within.
3. We can listen from our own bodysense empathically and compassionately to another person.
4. We can then, by following this method, turn our ear inward to listen to ourselves in the same caring way.
5. We can internally reflect the experience-bearing parts of our own story.
6. We can resonate these inner reflections just as we would if we were listening to another person.
7. We can give ourselves feedback to help us hone in on our own unfolding truths – to bring them into focus, and to keep us connected to our own inner experiencing.
8. We can receive the grace of this unfolding with caring and compassion.
9. We can use these unfoldings to heal our wounds and point the way to growth.
10. We can, in this way – just as happens when Focusing interactively with another person – form an intimate and compassionate connection, but this time with our deep inner selves, valuing ourselves and forming attachment to our own inner beings.

In brief, the components of learning the inner process of Focusing-

1. Clearing an inner space in which to listen and receive your story is a valuable though not required first step – a step, along with finding a right distance for “you-and-it,” that may be needed throughout your session.
2. Experientially defining and then contacting your own bodysense of your issue lets your story come forward.
3. Creating and maintaining a right environment, at a bodysense level, for yourself in which your story can unfold is necessary before your inner voice will feel safe enough to speak.

4. Getting in touch with your own story, your unfolding truth, and speaking it from your bodysense is the key to letting your story be told.
5. Listening to your own story from your bodysense with empathy and compassion allows this story finally to be heard.

The naturalness with which we can now teach and consequently learn Focusing has, for many I think, been enhanced and simplified through the building block method. The addition of empathic, experiential bodysense-based listening and storyteller-as-teacher has highlighted the importance of the knowing that the storyteller is her own best expert. It is she, also, who is her own best teacher. It is she who best knows how to heal herself. The discernment exercise that lets us have a body experience of the attitude in which we want to be listened to and to be heard has brought a fullness and aliveness in the way we come to listen that wasn't attended to heretofore. (*See the article The Four Building Blocks for a fuller description of this method.*)

The world changes, the forms of teaching Focusing changes-

It is only fitting that, as time passes, the method of teaching Focusing which Gendlin introduced to the world in the 1970s should undergo change. Many people have contributed to enhancing and fine-tuning these teachings. I believe Interactive Focusing is a major contribution to and a new stage in the development of Focusing that will allow this movement to stay abreast of the growing forward of world consciousness and transformation.

This brings the consideration that learning Focusing in different ways (for example Gendlin's six steps, Cornell's five steps-four skills, Klein's Interactive Focusing) with different emphases and developed by people with different starting points, different inner referents and different woundings to heal may have some surprising outcomes in the forms Focusing will take, in the reasons for turning to one particular kind of Focusing over another and in the kinds of healing and change that will result. These new developments and choices are a good thing, and more new developments and choices are needed and welcomed...and they will come because of the dynamic nature of Focusing.

In conclusion-

I have built a case, by looking at the internalization of speech and the development of empathy, for teaching Focusing in a way that will conform to our natural way of learning – by letting a healthy environment stimulate the growth of healthy internal structures. Interactive Focusing is one such way. Through Interactive Focusing we learn to listen with empathy and compassion

to another's deep inner truths unfold and come into focus. Using this method we have experienced outside of ourselves, we can listen to our own inner, deep processing. Perhaps it is through internalizing an external model that we can most readily take in and make our own something that is as natural as Focusing but which is, also, infrequently spontaneous in its arising.

Employing the building block method to teach the process has brought a new depth and aliveness to the learning process. Through Interactive Focusing we can learn to be empathic and compassionate, the qualities of "being with" that lead to the healing and growth and for which Focusing was intended when Gendlin first discovered it and developed it as a practice to be used in psychotherapy.

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